

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Announces Breakup of Fake Document Scheme

(Phoenix, Ariz. – May 30, 2006) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced the indictment of Victoria O. Romero, a prison guard with the Arizona Department of Corrections, charging her with fraud, conspiracy and money laundering. She is the final person to be charged in a Phoenix-based fraud scheme that charged as much as \$7,500 for fake immigration documents and victimized more than 500 people from across the country.

The criminal organization attracted victims with the promise of obtaining legitimate resident alien cards, also known as "green cards." In an effort to show their legitimacy, the defendants put each victim through an application process that included having their fingerprints taken. Victims actually received phony cards or no cards.

The indictment alleges that Romero, 36, of Buckeye, a guard at the State Prison in Perryville and now on administrative leave, took some of the victims' fingerprints and often was in uniform when she performed the task. The indictment also alleges that Romero used her credit card, or allowed her credit card to be used, to purchase a fingerprint stand and 300 FBI fingerprint cards for use in this fraud scheme.

Carmen Tolle, 42, of Phoenix, was the leader of this organization and has pleaded guilty to fraud and theft with a prior conviction. Tolle was sentenced earlier this month to seven-and-a-half years in prison and five years probation. She was also ordered to pay \$75,690 in restitution.

The investigation started in April 2005 and was conducted by the Arizona Financial Crimes Task Force. The investigation found that many of the victims traveled from as far as New York City and Miami to receive these documents.

"The breakup of this large-scale fraud is a credit to the sophisticated and systematic work of the Financial Crimes Task Force," Goddard said. "I also hope this prosecution makes the point that there are no short cuts to obtaining legal status in this country, despite the efforts of those who seek to exploit illegal immigrants."

The other defendants include:

- Rachel Gallegos, 37, pleaded guilty to theft with a prior conviction. Gallegos was sentenced to four years in prison and ordered to pay \$75,690 in restitution.

- Gloria Orozco, 44, of Phoenix. Orozco pleaded guilty to forgery and was sentenced to six months in jail, four years probation and ordered to pay \$23,000 in restitution.

Romero will be arraigned in Superior Court on June 7. If convicted as charged, she faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$180,000 fine.

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